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A
SERMON

PREACHED

In Christs Church *Bristol*,
At the Assizes for that City and
County, Holden *August* the 1st. 1676.

By *Samuel Crossman* B. D. One of his Ma-
jesties Chaplains, and Prebend of *Bristol*.

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à sacris domesticis.

L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year, 1676.



To the Right Worshipfull
Sir Robert Cann, Kt. and Baronet,
Mayor of the City of Bristol.

Right Worshipsul,

TIs matter of just amazement, that sin
so wretched in its nature, so pernicious
in its issues; should yet obtain so vast,
so general an Interest all over the world.

This great dishonour thus apparently done
as well to Reason, as Religion, must certainly
be attributed to the common depravedness
of mankind, to the naughtiness of our own
hearts, which (in this collapsed conditi-
on of ours) are now carnal, and sold un-
der sin. Or (as Solomon expresseth it) fully
set in us to do evil.

For the better redress whereof, God ha-
ving erected those solemn ordinances Ma-
gistracy, and Ministry, hath put this matter
into both their Commissions; making it an e-
minent part of their work in their several
sphears.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Spears, to give all due rebukes to vice, all due encouragements to virtue; as the proper direct method both to civil, and sacred welfare.

Such hath been the gracious care of God in our behalf. Every good man must, and will heartily say, Amen; Oh let this righteous pleasure of the Lord prosper in their hands.

In some desires of serving these good ends was this discourse at first compos'd; and since thus published.

Honoured Sir, Omitting any circuitous ambages; I shall only take leave with all due gratefulness to acknowledge the many obligations you have pleased to lay upon me: and by this paper to offer to your second Meditations, what you vouchsafed so religiously to resent, when first preached before you, by

*Bristol,
Aug. 10. 1676.*

Honoured Sir,

Your justly obliged, and

Truly humble servant

Samuel Crossman.



A

S E R M O N

Preached in Christs Church at *Bristol*, At the
 Assizes holden for that City and County,
August 1. 1676.

St. Matth. 24. 12.

*And because iniquity shall abound, the love
 of many shall wax cold.*



Severe declaiming against present times, may be in some cases not so much the fruit of piety, as of pettishness. A querulous ingratitude towards God, and as unhandsome disingenuity towards men.

'Tis a caution justly given by *Solomon*; say not, what is the cause that the former days were better then these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this, *Eccl. 7. 10.* Certain it is, the world hath

hath its frequent vicissitudes in morals, as well as in naturals. It hath had its open alternations and seasons of sinking sometimes into vice and of recovering it self again at other times to some competent degrees of vertue ; else we had long since come to those sad *Hercules* pillars whereof the Poet so satyrically speaketh,

Non habet ulterius quod nostris moribus addat posteritas.—

Sin had long ago risen to its utmost *Zenith*, its fullest growth and height, beyond which it could have proceeded no further.

But still though some ages may have the happy lot of appearing as a hopeful spring after a dead winter : yet others prove as a declining autumn after a more fruitful summer. The succession of ages 'tis very often like that of families. If a pious *Josiah* comes forth after a wretched *Amon* ; 'tis as true a wicked *Manasseh* may succeed a righteous *Hezekiah*. This decay touching these last days, 'tis not only the complaint of the vulgar (where we have many times as much passion, as judgement) but the deep sense and sorrow of all impartial serious persons, that *iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold.*

We have in this and the next Chapter our Saviours memorable prediction both of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the end of the *world*, The former as some Embleme, and adumbration of the latter.

Plain

Plain it is from all writers, scarce any judgement (in many circumstances) fuller of consternation then that which befell these hard hearted *Jews* for their rejection of *Christ*, Their sin 'twas dearly bought, dearly paid for.

That kingdom which had sometime appeared as *Princess among the provinces* ; that City which had been so honourably stiled, *the joy and beauty of the whole earth* ; that Temple which *Tacitus* acknowledgeth a structure of most immense magnificence and riches ; one of the just wonders of the world (as others call it) for all exquisiteness and splendour ; loe, now people and kingdom, City and Temple, all these goodly buildings laid together under one common ruinous heap. And if *Josephus* (their own historian) may be believed,

Ὡς μὲν πρότερον ὀικουμένην πύργῳ ἀνέστη
παράγειν τοῖς προσελθόνσι, &c.

Travellers passing by could scarce see or say ; *here was once Jerusalem.*

The stones of emptiness, and line of confusion were now truly enough stretch't upon it. *Turnus Rufus* (that רשע, that *Wicked wretch*, as the Jewish writers with indignation call him) had now drawn a plough in scorn over that very place, where formerly the Temple stood. Fulfilling literally what was (in all probability neither believ'd nor fear'd though) so expressly foretold ; *Zion for your sake shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house, as the*

high places of the forrest, Mich. 3. 12.

Thus was the admired *Naomi* become now another *Marah*. The joyous City and people made a sad spectacle of astonishment, a second *Shilo*, a pillar of salt, a terrour and warning to all.

Men and Brethren! let us not deceive our selves, sin 'tis no trifle, nor can God be mocked. He that spared not *Jerusalem*, how shall he spare us, if we tread under foot the things that belong to our peace?

The Text 'tis one of those previous signes, which should forerun *Ieruselems* ruine. Many whereof (as *Aretius* very well observes) *Ad diem judicii quoque accommodari possint*, they do as well suit with, and may as safely be applyed to, these last days of the world, as those of *Ieruselems* fall. So that we may too truly say; this day is this Scripture fulfilled, *iniquity aboundeth and the love of many waxeth cold.*

Iniquity, that is, (taking the word as *Grotius* in a restrictive sense) the iniquity of persecutions, the continuance and encrease of their savage cruelties against Christians. Such a bloody trade did the Devil then drive in those primitive persecutions. Oh what abundant cause of thankfulness to God have we! to whom Divine providence hath reserved milder times, times of serenity and freedom in the profession of Christian religion. May we be wise unto soberness, and make a right improvement of our mercies.

Or 2dly, *Iniquitie*, that is (say others) those manifold scandals, which not long after did arise, some from

from the persons seducing, such as *Benchochab*, that false son of the stars, with his wilde rabble after him: some from the numerous heaps of persons seduced, crying *loe here, and loe there!* in a meer phrenzy of delusion; whereby the lustre of the Christian Church became greatly ecclipsed, and multitudes (no doubt) unhappily cool'd, and taken off from the due embracement of the Gospel.

Such sad spectacles (both the one and the other) have most ages afforded: so prone have some been to believe a lie. And so unable have others been, to step over this stone of offence, and to continue (notwithstanding this sore temptation) a sober constant love to deserted, slighted truth.

3ly, And lastly, *Iniquitie*, that is, taking the expression (as some others) at a greater latitude, it then importeth, *Communem naturæ humanæ pravitatem*, the common pravity of humane nature. As if our Saviour had said, this as another *Nilus* shall overflow all its banks.

Exiliet franis Natura remotis.

The reins being laid loose, mankind shall be seen to run even wilde into all excesses of vice: *Πανδυσθησας*, that is, 'twill not be the bare subsistence and being of sin, but sin multiplyed and encreased: measures of iniquity heaped, and running over; sin rampant, with all circumstances of hainousness accompanying of it: fulfilling that ancient similitude of the prophet; *the press is full, the fats overflow, their wickedness is great, Joel. 3. 13.*

Such (saith our Saviour) will be the forepart of the scene, and the latter as dismal; *The love of many shall wax cold.* That love which is the end of the commandment, that love which is the fulfilling of the whole law; *Προσεται*, it shall lose its vital heat and warmth. It shall become in this hard season, as it were frozen to death; disheartned, and driven off the stage by the violence of sin. An issue sad enough, but too likely to ensue where sin prevails. *Vera pietas extinguetur*, so Gerhard. the prodigious torrent and inundation of sin, shall even quench; and discourage almost all practice or owning of any piety or vertue.

We have in the words (without any labour of more curious division) the cause and effect, the antecedent and consequent, all of the same sad complexion; sin upon sin, and misery upon misery as devouring waves immediately following one another. *Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold.*

From the verse as it stands capable of a various aspect, we have several weighty truths emergent, such as may sadden us, but such as must also concern us.

1. Looking upon the words in their causality and influence they bear, the former to the latter, we may thence observe; the growth and encrease of sin, 'tis an extreme prejudice and hindrance to all goodness. *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

2. Looking upon the words as they stand in conjunction with the times they point unto, we may then

then observe; *Alt those seasons when people both might and should be best, it may so fall out, that they prove then far worst.*

3. The last view of the words is in some respects yet sadder; Looking on them as one of the previous signes of *Ierusalem's* destruction, they plainly import; *The encrease of sin, the decay of piety, they are things fatal and ominous to any people, presages of impending calamity*, where these go before we may justly fear the tragical sequels they here relate to. *Then shall there be great tribulation. vers. 21.*

1. Looking upon the words in that causality and influence the former bear to the latter, we may thence observe, the growth and increase of sin, 'tis an extreme prejudice and hindrance to all goodness. *Because iniquitie shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*; sin, 'tis as the weeds in the field, their encrease impairs the whole crop of corn; or as that venomous tree the *Arcadian Yew-tree*; which (as *Plinie* relates) casteth a deadly killing shade; nothing kindly thrives wherever that spreads its branches. That men as men, owe to God a life of vertue, and as Christians a life of more transcendent piety; all our hearts, and indeed the whole world must freely yield, and Eccho, *Yes*. But alas! where sin sets up its hellish standard, how shall this be performed? Humane nature is weak and example proves more then whole loads of arguments, *Pecorum ritu antecedentium gregem sequimur, pergentes non quâ sit cundum sed quâ itur*; said *Seneca* very truly; we are like sheep following the common tract of others, though never so far out of our way.

Way : principles of good are but faint and weak even in the best : when the iron age comes on indeed, the next news is,

Vicia jacet pietas.

Vice goes up, and the sacred interest of vertue that goes as fast down.

Dayly experience sheweth it in things natural. Contraries (we say) abide not together. They are of a contending nature ; the one chaseth away the other. Thus where darkness cometh, light is forced to go : Thus where the extremity of cold prevaileth, the more desirable warmth and heat are lost. The case, 'tis parallel in a diviner sense : after this manner (saith the *Apostle*) doth sin ^{encompass} *encompass* us, *Rom. 7. 23.* It fighteth, and fighteth in earnest against the whole interest of holiness. It seems to cry out againg piety, as the *Edomites* did against *Ierusalem* ; *Rase it, rase it, even to the ground.* Let but evil once get up, and that will quickly bring down whatever is good. Where the one usurps the other becomes dethroned.

To be truly religious in the best times 'tis much, but to be such in bad times , 'tis almost a miracle : If ill words be enough (as the *Apostle* observes) to corrupt good manners ; ill words, and ill works put both together, are much more able to do it. In such a common degeneracy one *Lot*, one *Noah* is a great raritie in Gods own reckoning. Thee (that is thee only) have I seen righteous before me in this generation, *Gen. 7. 1.*

To

To put the case into a familiar way of instance ; when Atheism and contempt of religion shall generally reign, how shall an ingenuous person (without very much conflict in himself) be able to bear up any due acknowledgments of God in all his ways ? when almost all places shall run into drunkenness and excessive healths, how shall the most sober person contain himself within the due bounds of temperance ? when uncleanness and all manner of wanton lusts shall appear Epidemical, impudent, and as the sin of *Sodom* ; how hard is it then to observe and honour chastity as it ought ? when people shall every where become effeminate and fond in their attire, how loth shall we be to expose our selves to the scorn of others, by continuing a plain, decent modest habit ? when profane swearing shall grow the common dialect, how prone will our own lips be to take up those unhappy accents ? when every novell wilde opinion, shall grow the more creditable religion, who can then (without very much grace,) steadily consist with ancient sound doctrine ? Lastly (to ask no more of these sadning questions) when debauchedness and drollery shall grow the only gentile mode, oh how ready shall we all then be, to grow ashamed of holiness and the fear of God ? Thus may a righteous cause become oppressed, and religion it self even laught to scorn through the insolencies of sin.

Under such hard circumstances, the best of men may be prone to fall into such convulsive fits, as one sometimes exprest ; Ah ! *quoties mecum dixi numquid ego solus sapio ?* &c. It is the secret

cret language of many a good mans heart; Lord! *my judgment is satisfied, my affection settled ; I could truly say ; methinks no life like a life of serious piety. But when I look abroad into the world, I see 'tis far otherwise : Lo, there, rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantoness, strife and envying. And these things, I must confess, almost quench and cool all my former willing thoughts for heaven : I could often lay my hand upon my heart, and say ; what ? am I wiser, am I better then others ? who, or what do I take my self to be ?*

Oh my Brethren ! A holy life it is not without its difficulties ; Lo, here the snare unseen, the temptation that presseth so hard upon the most candid persons ; They are many times better inwardly then they know to shew themselves outwardly ; Others are bad, and this maketh them half ashamed to be good : Loth they are to disoblige, loth to do any thing, which might seem to reflect on the vices of others. And this maketh us still at our former loss ; sin depresseth better things : When that is at its highest *Tropic*, Religion is usually then at its lowest.

We commonly say (and the preceding instances are evidence enough of it) that scarce any man sinneth singly to himself alone : he becomes a snare and danger to others. At this unhappy rate have the overflowings of ungodliness in these last days drowned many. The devils work proves done to his hand. Ingenuous natures become dayly debauch'd, hopeful inclinations immediately blasted, green unpoiz'd years easily drawn aside. And
all

all this through the common encrease of sin. Thus as the Poet said, is *Astraea* driven away ; or rather thus may we say, is *Piety* weakned and wounded amongst us.

Honoured and Beloved ! the consideration it is momentous, it is truly great and weighty, it calleth upon us all in our several places, to be real and earnest for the suppressing of evil, lest otherwise that pulleth down whatever is good : our kindness to sin, it is our unkindness to God. So far as we countenance vice, so far we frown upon virtue ; and tread under foot whatever is honest, whatever is lovely, whatever is praiseworthy in the sight of God, or men.

2dly, Looking upon the words as they stand in conjuncture with the times they point to, we may then observe ; *At those seasons when people both might and should be best, it may so fall out that they prove then far worst.*

We may look upon the present arraignment as relating either to the sins of the *Jews* or of the *Gentiles*. 'Tis the same truth we have, the same equal grounds for the observation in both.

1. In reference to the Jews :

'Twas Gods complaint in the prophet ; *When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, Hos. 7. 1.* An extreme improper season. The accent of time *when*, made the offence sevenfold the greater. 'Twas sin very ill timed. Such was *Ierusalem's* case. The *Messiah* was now come, on this very design, *That he might destroy the works of the devil*, the darkness was now pass't,
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and the true light shining, life and immortality (those dear desirable things) brought now to light. The times of former ignorance God had winked at : but now call'd upon all men every where to repent. The *Apostles* (those blessed Ministers of state) ready at hand to assist in this heavenly work. A definitive time prefixt, (as in the *Ninevites* case) yet within a few years, or it would be too late. Temple and City, and People, would all lie under ashes, if the forethreatned judgment were not prevented by a religious speedy turning to God.

But lo, after all, in stead of grapes, behold wilde grapes, in stead of holiness to the Lord, it proveth (as the *Apostle* relateth their case) far otherwise ; *A filling up their sins that wrath might come upon them to the uttermost*, 1 *Thess.* chap. 2. ver. 15, 16.

Ierusalem that very people to whom Christ had so divinely preach't ; *Never man spake like this man*, *Iohn* 7. 46. that very people over whom he had so pathetically mourned, *And when he was come near, he beheld the City and wept over it*, *Luk.* 19. 41. that very people for whom after all their indignities, and in the midst of all his own extremest Agonies, he yet so affectionately prayed, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*, *Luk.* 23. 34. that very people toward whom his bowels had always so particularly, so tenderly yearned, *Oh Ierusalem, Ierusalem ! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as an hen gathereth her chickens ?* *Math.* 23. 37. yet this, this very

very people, as if incapable of being obliged by all the methods of love and sweetness ; nothing can relish, nothing seems to take with them but sin and hell : *Iniquity abounds.*

Men and Brethren ! who can conceive how far the hopefulest persons, the fairest seasons may fall short of divine expectation ? 'Twas *Ierusalem's* case, it was their sin, 'tis our danger.

Or 2dly, If we take the words as relating to the sin of the *Gentiles*, the aggravation is still the same. now was their *Accepted time*, now was their *Day of salvation*. Now were those wilde branches to be ingrafted with so much honour into the good Olive : Divine grace, hitherto so great a stranger to them, and they to that, sought now for their embraces, this was their heavenly nuptiall day, *Lo* (saith the Apostle) *we turn to the Gentiles* ; that is, to carry, and tender to them that kingdom, those treasures of mercy, which you *Jews* so unworthily turn your backs upon, how justly might the worth of the message make the feet of those holy men who brought these blessed tidings beautiful and welcome to them ? yet here also, (as if all flesh were willfully set upon walking contrary to God) we finde the *holy City* troden under foot by these *Gentiles*, and by them polluted with *Idols*.

The religious *Ierusalem* was now turned into a prophane *Elia* ; A swines head set up at the gates in derision of the Jews : And (that they might at once bid the more open defiance to Christianity, and give the fullest establishment to Heathenisme)

thenifme) a temple is fet up for *Impiter* with all Paganifh solemnities upon Mount *Zion*.

It might have then been faid with very little alteration as in the Pfalms ; The blood of thy Apoftles and primitive Martyrs have they fhed like water in the ftreets ; the dead bodies of thy Saints have they given to the beafts of the earth, not only putting them to death but (as *Tacitus* though a heathen confelleth) *Pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contekti, canum laniatu interirent*, &c. The moft barbarous inhumane cruelties (cruelties not fit to be related for their unparallel'd favagenefs) were frequently added, in the manner of taking away the lives of thefe holy men ; making the Chriftians extreameft dying torments their play, their fport, and paftime. So that look which way we will, we have much one and the fame joylefs profpect ftill before us, *Iniquity every where aboundeth*.

And now may we too juftly come from *Ierufalem* home to our felves : He that fould fome-time fince have asked us here in *England* ; If God fould put up the fword of blood and war once more into its fheath ; If God fould pittie our wilde confufions, and reftore our ancient rightful Government in peace ; If God fould recall his deftroying Angel, and arrow of noifome peftilence, fparing a remnant of us as brands pluckt out of the fire ; would we after fuch fevere judgements, after fuch fignal mercies wallow as fwine in the mire of fin any more ? I know we fould have answered with indignation, as *Hazael* did to the Prophet ;

Prophet ; *Is thy servant a dog that I should do this thing ?* But, not to dispute that question ; we may thankfully say, men we are, not dogs : and yet as dogs have we returned to this vomit.

Let me (as *Samuel* once said to the *Israelites*) reason a little with you before the Lord in this matter. Can we in cool blood think that we were delivered to commit all these evils ? Or that vicious courses carry any thing of a reasonable manlike return to divine goodness for such tender mercies ? can we come off at the bar of our own conscience, with any excuse that holdeth water, that beareth worth or weight in it ? *Do we thus requite the Lord, Oh foolish people and unwise ?* Shall good nature and Education teach us better carriage toward men, for kindnesses received from them, and shall not Religion and grace much more keep us from returning evil for good unto God ? Hath *former history* brought such honourable reports to us, of others that have been so eminently good in bad times, and shall *future history* transmit our names with so much disgrace to posterity, for being as wretchedly bad in good-times ? Oh that this danger and reproach might be rolled from us.

What we might and should be, under those manifold advantages and mercies which (blessed be God) we comfortably enjoy, our own consciences are able to inform us. What we are, it is matter of amazement to most that know or hear of us.

Former

Former ages in this Island (it may be) have had their peculiar stains ; as *Gildas* and several other Writers pathetically enough relate. But such a general irruption of all sorts of sin as now, we scarce finde in any history. If heretofore times have been shamelessly dissolute, it is now much more. The foundations themselves are very far out of course. 'Tis become with many open Atheism toward God ; the Almighty himself is not spared. 'Tis become with many meer giddy scepticism in the most fundamental points of faith ; that faith which is reverently to be embraced, not rudely or desultoriously to be tossed to and fro. 'Tis become with many common schism and separation from the publick assemblies of the Church. A general irreverence, contempt and scorn of almost all Government.

And what too easily follows from such untoward premises, the utmost immoralities of life. Those evils which modest nature would heretofore have startled at, they grow now the fashion and familiar practice of multitudes, what horrid swearing ! the first and chief language that is heard from many children in the open streets : what common drunkenness ! what wretched lewdness ! as if we might abuse our selves, and dishonour our bodies, those bodies, which should be as so many Temples to the holy Ghost, after any sordid sensual rate, as we please.

What intolerable phantasticalness of habit ! what filthy lasciviousness of speech ! what loathsome debauchedness (as the *Sonies* of Hell) upon
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on the whole Conversation ! so that as Reverend *Hammond* complaineth) were it not for some few ancient primitive spirited persons, we might have reason to think and say ; *That Christian men are grown the impurest part of the world.*

'Tis a smart exprobration we meet with in *Salvian* upon this account, *Non sufficient multis consuetudinarij reatus, non vinolentiae, non adulteria, non homicidia ; nisi manus etiam in Deum injiciant.* The ordinary rates of sin would not then serve mens turns, they were furiously set upon it (like those *Giants* in the *Poet*) to fly in the very face of God himself.

Men and brethren ! we must with blushing confesse ; to these high spring tides of sin, to this exorbitant outrageous posture are we also come. The prophets Indictment may be in several particulars found true against us ; *They overpass the deeds of the wicked, Jer. 5. 28.* In defiance of all sober counsel from God or man ; many will be not only wicked ; but (to use *Solomons* phrase, *Wicked overmuch*, though to the astonishment of beholders , they thereby *destroy themselves, and die before their time.*

Magistracy we have , and Ministry we have ; And blessed be God , we have them. But still (like the churlish *Quartan Ague* , that stubborn *dedecus medicorum*) as if the disease were too strong for the physick ; or our distemper above the means of cure : much so it fareth with us : sin proveth (as those *sons of Zeruiah*) too hard for us , it seems to bear no check ; but rather
strugleth

strugleth to get further ground of us. And we must lament together, both Magistrates and Ministers; whether through defectiveness in us, or through averfeness and renitencies in the people, or through the just displeasure of God against this whole Age; so it is, the good work of God for the suppressing of vice and promoting of virtue and pietie, succeedeth but very poorly upon our hands.

These things are not spoken, that we should as ships in a sea-storm fall fowl one upon another. *God forbid!* Obliquities of this nature were the adding of evil to evil, that our guilt might become yet greater. He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone at his neighbour.

'Tis not the nature or temper of true holyness to make much popular noise in the world; as if we were then only the brave *Heroes*, and Champions for Religion, when we can most satyrically lash at others, No, no: every man stands or falls to his own master. The greatest complainers, (if the case be impartially searcht,) are sometimes found, persons as deeply in fault as any.

The best, the holiest may safely lay their hands in a due modestness upon their hearts, and say; *Are there not with us, even with us also, sins against the Lord our God?*

The best acquitment of our selves in times of common corruption, were, to walk as *Noah*, and to grieve as *Lot*; Ingenuously to mourn, and exemplarily to deport our selves, every man in his place,

place, as becometh persons that truly fear God.

3^{ly}, The last aspect of the words, is upon some account (in reference to the consequences) yet sadder. As they are one of the previous signes of *Ierusalem's* destruction, they import ; *The encrease of sin, the decay of Piety, they are the presages of much impending calamitie.*

1. The encrease of sin ; what diseases, and infections are to our bodies personally, such are common raging vices to Kingdoms, and Nations publickly ; Apparent ill habits, moral Pestilences. If the former may be death to us, the latter may be as truly ruine to them. The *Amorites* sin was the *Amorites* undoing.

We are told in the Prophet, *Amos* 9. 8. *The eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom ; and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth, saith the Lord.* Thus is sin the abomination that maketh desolate wherever it cometh. The *Achan*, the accursed thing that always troubleth Gods *Israel*.

There is no delusion more frequent then for wicked persons to flatter themselves with hopes of favourable fair issues, in their most villanous fowlest actions. 'Tis taken for granted, some may be so bold, so hardy, as to say ; *I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst* But it seems the Conclusion is too hastily drawn ; Gods reckoning and theirs agree not. *The Lord will not spare him ; but the anger and jealousy of the Lord shall smoke against that man.* *Dent.* 29. 19, 20. so inseparable a connexion

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there is between the cause and the effect. *Cain* quickly found it a real truth. He hath no sooner done his bloody work, but the next tidings is ; *My punishment is greater then I can bear. Gen. 4. 13.* מַּיַּי *my sin*, one and the same word is left in the *Hebrew* to exprefs both, in token that the sinner carrieth his punishment in his sin. If he will needs have the one ; God will see that he shall also have the other.

The case it is plainly the same toward whole Nations, that we finde here toward one *Cain* : If there be any difference, 'tis this ; some pious learned persons who have most sollicitously observ'd the methods and history of Divine Providence have thought ; that God who sheweth many times such great patience toward particular persons in their sins ; proceedeth usually with a more visible severity, when sin becometh common and *National* ; when all flesh shall have corrupted their way ; then is a time for God to take the case more immediately into his own hand, then may we fear days of vengeance and visitation.

All ages, all histories have jointly exemplified the reality of this danger : thus (*Xenophon* relateth) the *Persian Monarchy* became ruined :

Διὰ τὴν ἑκείνων περὶ μὲν Θεοῦ ἀσεβειᾶν ,
περὶ δὲ ἀνθρώπων ἀδίκιαν. &c.

In part through their impieties toward God, in part through their injuries and evil courses toward

ward men. Thus the *Grecians*, and thus after them the *Romans*, they also fell. As vice was seen to rise, they and their *Empire* were as manifestly observed to decline and fall.

An hundred Walls (as the *Comedian* sportingly said in that serious matter) are no defence to a vicious City; It lieth still open and naked to all misery.

Τὴν αὖ ἀλγὴν ἐδωκεν ἐκκλῆσαν ἡδ' ἔτι δάσσει.

Thus firmly was this great truth believed, thus openly asserted among the *Heathens* by their own *Poets*. For these things (say they) *God hath visited, and for these things God will yet visit*. So that, if we either credit Gods word or mans experience, we may safely say; *sin leads to ruine*.

2dly, The decay of Piety, that is likewise as hard an abodement: we finde this very case propos'd as *Moses's*, life or death, a blessing or a curse, and the sequel left to the peoples practical choice. *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.* 2 Chron. 15. 2. As if the great *Christ* lay perfectly here; And the truest calculation of all publick welfare or misery, were to be derived from our faithfulness, or unfaithfulness to God.

Religion it is as those sacred ministrations in the Temple; the preservatives of the City. And on the contrary, where the *Holy fire* goeth out; where the *Daily sacrifice* ceaseth; calamity seem-

eth there to follow (as it were) of course.

When *Abraham* gives over interceding, then *Sodom* burns down to ashes indeed. When *Moses's* hands fall down through faintness, then *Amalek* prevaieth : When there is none found to stand in the gap, then God powreth out his indignation upon *Israel* : When the *Disciples* fall to slumber, we may too truly say ; then is Satans hour and the power of darknes.

I confesse, we neither need, nor can believe, that every stir and bustle that is preposterously made in the world about Religion, goeth for real piety in the sight of God. We have all of us more of dross then gold; More of carnal passion and animosity, then of spiritual devotion and zeal for God or Heaven. Religion, 'tis a sacred concern, and must be modestly, not boisterously managed. There is scarce any consideration sadder then that of those manifold dismal mischiefs that have been acted from mistakes of this nature.

But still there is such a thing, as a cordate affection, and forwardnesse for Religion ; Our bounden duty, and of great price in the sight of God : and wherever this first love is once lost, we may justly fear, Gods Candlestick is in imminent danger of being removed.

It were extreme arrogance, and disrespect toward the common sense of mankind, for any of us to think, that flights of Religion are safe things. *Italie* (saith the Poet) hath smarted sorely upon this very account ;

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*Dij multa neglecti dedere
Hesperiae mala luctuosa.*

And we finde *Livy* taking up the case into a peremptory standing assertion ; *Omnia prospera eveniunt colentibus Deos, adversa spernentibus* ; all things (saith he) succeed well where Religion is duely observed ; and where that lieth neglected all things go usually as backward and ill.

But we shall close up this Consideration with a greater Testimony then any of these, even that of dying *Moses*, who taking his last leave of *Israel*, and having forewarned them, that in case of their revolt from God, he would heap up mischiefs upon them ; at length sealeth up his whole Discourse with this moving Argument, putting duty and mercy both together. *Observe* (saith he) *all the words of this law ; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go, over Jordan to possess it : Deut. 32. 46, 47.* May it be our care to approve our selves faithfull in the one ; may it be our lot to experience Gods goodnesse in the other.

The

The Application.

And now *Honoured and Beloved* ! I have but one *Use* to make of the whole : but it calleth for the utmost seriousness at all our hands.

Such (as you have heard) such is the riseness, such the contagiousness, such the destructiveness of Sin. In Gods most holy Name, let us fear and tremble , lest we also fall under this sad infection , and so iniquity becomeh our ruine.

If sovereign Antidotes be so greatly esteemed in times of common Pestilence ; (unless we do most wretchedly prevaricate in the whole profession of Religion) thus highly must we value , thus heartily must we seek Gods Grace , as the souls divine , and only true Antidote in evil times.

And blessed be God, a holy watchfulness (duly kept up) may preserve us, while security and carelessness would most certainly betray us into danger. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation.*

Diogenes Laertius reporteth of *Socrates*, though he lived in *Athens*, where the plague often raged, even to extremity in his time : yet by his strict Temperance he kept himself in perfect health through all those dangers. Such is the world likely enough to be ; *An infected Athens*. Oh that we may be found as *Socrates* , in a state of better health , untouch't of all the evils of it.

Our

Our Duty herein 'tis truly great, such as may prove a full employment for the whole soul: but still such, as approveth it self to every mans Conscience in the sight of God.

We may freely say (as once *Moses*,) What doth God the Lord require of us, but to keep our selves inoffensively clear from the sins of these last days? not waving the good offices of love or kindness due to the persons of any: and yet pertaking in evil with none.

Like *Cassianus* his Jewel-signet; *Universa quæ occurrunt ad sui statum transformat*; *nullius vero incurisibus insigniri potest*. Such should every one of us likewise be. As a seal of Diamond, giving fair impressions of virtue (upon every occasion) to others: but (of that firmness, as) not to suffer the least impressions of vice to be made by any means upon our selves.

How happy, oh how lovely were it! could men be truly brought to this good consistency, rais'd to this harmony with Heaven, settled in this excellency of Spirit, this steadiness of Life! neither superciliously forward, nor yet sinfully facile: but discreetly Religious. Then neither should *Iniquity abound*, nor Piety decay; then neither should our welfare fly from us, nor those miseries which are the common attendants on sin, hover with such frightful wings about us.

The general mending of bad times (we must all confess) 'tis a great work; it may be too great for particular persons, and beyond their
Sphear.

Sphear. *Abi frater in cellam, &c.* (as he said) Our private prayers and tears may better become us , then excentrical agitations. But still 'tis very much, that every one might truly do, in his place, so much, that could all be fairly perswaded , the whole might soon become happily redressed. However at the lowest ebb, *Noah*, *Daniel* and *Job*, (all good men) may yet deliver their own souls, when they cannot prevail to save the land.

But why speak we thus dejectedly? Be of good cheer all ye that fear God , *Dabit Deus his quoque finem.* I am prone to hope , it might be safely said ; Atheism, and giddinets (those hateful short liv'd things) will quickly run themselves out of breath , and the serious fear of God shall yet become a praise in the land

Religion is an ancient weather-beaten Ship , that hath successfully out-riden many a hard Sea-storm, and behold it is still above water : or like those Witnesses in the *Revelation*: Prophane men may rant and huff, they may deride and insolently run over it, supposing that they have dispatcht and slain it: But this kinde of crucifying effecteth little ; it hindreth not the promised Resurrection. Our Saviour after his sufferings, and the Witnesses after their slaughter , they both presently revive. And thus Religion after all these rude affronts, after all these vain attempts to eclipse it, usually shineth forth (to the joy of all good men) as the Sun out of a dark cloud with much brighter rays.

To

To draw to a Close ; The Ends of the World are come upon us ; evil *Days*. *Days* full of Sin, full of danger ; as an holy man said, *Omnia periculis plena, plena laqueis* ; All things, all places are (as it were) filled up with Temptations and snares : *Pudet non esse impudentem*, as St. *Austin* so pathetically cried out. It is come (saith he) to that height of impudence, that a virtuous person is put almost to blushing, if he be not as shamelessly forward in evil as the worst.

Now (if ever) may we say as the Apostle, (only, Oh that it may be conducted with all due circumstances of candour !) *Save your selves from this untoward generation* : Partake not with wicked men in their sins, that you partake not with them in their plagues.

This good care we owe to our selves, and our own preservation ; But that is not all ; There is somewhat more we still owe to God ; *A striving against sin*, Hebr. 12. 4. *Ἀνταγωνίζεσθαι*, exerting our utmost strength and spirits even to an *Agony*, in this Sacred Combat, to foil and bring down the Enemy.

Upon these terms we became initiated into Christian Religion. Thus to renounce the Devil and all his works ; Thus to bear up (as *Israel* against *Amalek*) a perpetual hostility against evil. We have opened our mouth to the Lord (as *Jephthah*) and we cannot go back.

This is that *Ho'y War*, to which we are all called, (that harmful war which alone aimeth to save, not to destroy ;) And happy are those that

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are

are found *Gods Worthies* in it. Such virtuous *Cato's* did the *Romans* account as needful to contend against the vices of peace at home, as their most valiant *Scipio's* to fight their enemies in times of war abroad.

We may slothfully meditate many foolish excuses : but certainly while there is so much of sin up and down the world ; Every true Christian must hold himself very highly concern'd, to appear so much the more visibly for God, and goodness in his place. Christianity 'tis not the bare acknowledgment of that worthy name by which we are called ; but the practical exhibiting of such a Conversation as may be fairly presidential, a real Patern, and Copie to all.

And praised be God, 'tis possible ; (as he said in the Poet) *Exemploque suo mores reget*. The strength of solid good Examples may very far stem the stream of Vice ; and by degrees recover men from the error of their ways, to the love and acceptance of better things.

Goodness of Life 'tis an Argument will be re-sented, and heard, when (it may be) the lowdest words are not. Conversation best winneth Conversation ; and is always the most prevailing *Oratour* in this case, that may gain many happy converts ; where other means (though truly righteous) may yet prove abortive, and miscarry.

And now could this desirable effect, this pious conquest be attain'd ; we should soon finde the consequence like that rare passage, that religious Close between *Cacilius*, and *Octavius* in *Minutius Felix* ;

Felix; Both joy'd, neither griev'd. Both Victors and yet neither Captive. Such might our case also be; a mutual mercy, a general Triumph, an universal joy, satisfaction, and honour on all hands.

Our stations may be different, (as the Occasion which we this Day wait upon, sheweth) but our Duty it is to all of us (at least for substance) but one; *An unfeigned, upright approving our selves to God in all well-doing.*

May we so resolve, and so practice; we have this just comfort, that none can take from us; whoever falleth, this man standeth; whoever is found a curse or shame to the place or times he liveth in, loe! here is one whom Posterity shall freely acknowledge, both a Blessing and Honour to his Country.

We may cheerfully say, as the spirit of God to the Churches in the *Revelation*; *They that defile not their Garments, shall walk with God.* Or as our blessed Saviour in the Consolatory Promise, immediately added, to allay the sad tidings of the Text; *Though iniquity shou'd abound, and the love of never so many wax cold; yet He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.*

Which God of his Mercies vouchsafe to us.

F I N I S.